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**The Chinese Communist Party and People's Liberation Army:
Political Change in China**

by

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Thesis

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Political Change in China**

**Approved by
Supervising Committee:**

Gordon Bennett

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Dedication

To Kelly, for enduring my penchant for procrastination and the resulting need to
work on many weekends.

To Bill and Liz Pettigrew, for the love and support that continues to inspire me.

To Francis William Dupont, I'm sure you're proud of this accomplishment.

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Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party and People's Liberation Army: Political Change in China

Philip A. Dupont, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2001

Supervisor: Gordon Bennett

As China undergoes social and political transformation, the Chinese Communist Party realizes that control of the People's Liberation Army is necessary to ensure the Party's monopoly of power. A review of Party policies designed to reduce the PLA's political power, a subsequent decrease of military personnel serving in Party positions, the development of professional characteristics in the PLA, and the PLA's embrace of the mission to defend the PRC against foreign threats demonstrate the PLA's altered political role in China. The PLA has willingly accepted the Party's leadership while retaining enough political power to negotiate increased autonomy in military affairs, larger military

budgets, and a more prominent role in guiding China's national defense policies and foreign relations.

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INTRODUCTION

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), how is the People's Liberation Army (PLA) responding to the diffusion of political power that was for decades monopolized by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)? China continues to evolve from a relatively primitive agricultural economy ruled by a one-party dictatorship isolated from world affairs to a more complex global economy and competitive polity highly active in world events. While CCP membership is at an historic high,¹ and while the CCP leaders show no indication or willingness to share power or permit alternative political parties anytime soon, the fact remains that further political opening is inevitable. The "party-army" of revolutionary days and the Party of the post-revolutionary era have grown into a massive bureaucracy larger than those found in most countries of the world. The Party is adapting to China's emerging modernity in order to maintain its monopoly of power. The question is how the PLA, a historically politicized military that was a central component of the ruling center, is adapting along with it.

Is the PLA designing to take advantage of the Party's dwindling status to assert itself as a new power center in China? Short of this, is the PLA striving to retain sufficient political power to bargain with civilian leaders over military budgets and security policies? Or is the PLA content to step back from politics

¹ "Political Forces," *The Economist*, September 5, 2001 [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.economist.com/countries/China/profile.cfm>; Internet; Accessed 13 September 2001. CCP membership is approximately 64.5 million or 5 percent of the population.

and develop as a professionalized military force dedicated solely to China's international security?

To study the PLA's response to Party directed adjustments in China's economic, political, social, and systems, I will examine four categories of evidence: (1) actions undertaken by the party to maintain or improve its control of the military; (2) the degree of PLA participation in party and state organizations; (3) the degree to which the PLA has become a professional military organization; and (4) the degree to which the PLA is institutionally focused on china's external threats?

PARTY ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE CONTROL OF THE MILITARY

The CCP's ability to maintain a relatively strong degree of control over the PLA is explainable at the simplest level by the fact that the two organizations have evolved in a tight, rather complementary relationship, for more than seventy years. In the few instances of recognized high-level PLA-Party disputes (the dismissals of Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai in 1959 and Army Chief of General Staff Luo Ruiqing in 1965) the CCP has always asserted its ultimate dominance. The CCP has taken the necessary steps to ensure it continues to "control the gun." The Party utilizes both institutional means and political penetration in order to control the military.²

COMMANDING THE CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION

The unwritten rule of Chinese politics is that the paramount leader must control the CMC.³ A *Party* CMC has always existed in various guises while a *State* CMC was not established until the adoption of the 1982 edition of the PRC constitution. Prior to 1978, the President of the PRC commanded the armed forces of the PRC. Article 19 of the constitution enacted in 1978 placed the armed forces under the charge of the CCP chairman. The chairman of the CCP commands the

² David Shambaugh, "Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China: The Search for New Paradigms," in James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, eds., *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), 45.

³ Tai Ming Cheung, "The Influence Of The Gun: China's CMC And Its Relationship With The Military, Party, And State Decision Making Systems" in David Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese Foreign Policy and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 62.

PLA, "the pillar of dictatorship of the proletariat." Additionally, Article 29 declares that the PLA belongs to the people, which is generally interpreted to mean the State. The phrase "the PLA is led by CCP" was dropped in the 1982 edition of the constitution in favor of "the armed forces of the PRC belong to the people." Also, Article 93 states that the CMC leads the PLA but says that the State Council also "leads" the armed forces.

Another interesting feature of the 1982 constitution is that it contains few references to the CCP, and passages referring to control of the armed forces use the more benign word to "lead" rather than "command." So while the constitution appears to declare that the State is the dominant political entity, the political framework in China still allows for the Party CMC to control the military.⁴ More specifically, shortly before the State CMC was established, the 12th Party Congress approved the membership of the new Party CMC with Deng Xiaoping as chairman, which was appointed as the State CMC three months later.⁵ The Party's control over the military was thus strengthened with the PLA now legally subjugated to the Party's leadership. When Jiang was designated CMC chairman in 1989, he was institutionally and legally the commander in chief of the PLA by Constitutional authority. However, he was the de-facto commander in chief because he led the Party CMC.

Further discussion of the CMC may clarify help this point. The 1982 Constitution initiated the creation of a *State* CMC, which first met in 1983. On the

⁴ John Yin, *Government of Socialist China* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984). 181-184.

⁵ Zheng Shiping, *Party vs. State in Post-1949 China: The Institutional Dilemma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 264.

face of it, this appeared to be an excellent example of Deng's goal of removing the Party from the State, of creating a State government holding greater autonomy from the Party. However, on closer inspection, the State CMC was composed of the same personnel in the Party CMC. This ambiguity, intentional or not, results from the manner in which CMC membership is established.⁶ The National People's Congress (NPC) elects the chairman of the CMC and the chairman nominates the remaining members, who are then confirmed by the NPC.⁷ This apparent endorsement of Party decisions is one of many instances of the NPC acting as a 'rubber stamp' in approving Party directives. Constitutional wording that charges the State with leading the CMC notwithstanding, control of the armed forces ultimately rests with the Secretary General of the Party or the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). The Party is unwilling to allow control of the armed forces to rest outside of the Party.

Why is the CMC so critical for maintaining command of the armed forces? After all, the State CMC chairman is technically responsible to the NPC,⁸ and the Ministry of National Defense (MND) falls under the purview of the State Council. In the PRC government hierarchy, the Party CMC is accorded stature equal to that of the State Council. As a result it reports directly to the Politburo.

The MND, unlike the U.S. Department of Defense, does not exercise actual authority over the PLA. The major departments within the PLA, the

⁶ Bickford, "Retrospective," 61.

⁷ "The Central Military Commission," *People's Daily*, [newspaper on-line]; Available from <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/data/organs/militarycommission.shtml>; Internet; Accessed 10 July 2001.

⁸ Zheng, 246.

General Staff Department (GSD), General Political Department (GPD), the General Logistics Department (GLD), and the General Armaments Department (GAD) control the daily operations of the PLA.⁹ These departments report directly to the Party CMC, effectively bypassing the legal stipulations that dictate State leadership of the military. Because CMC leaders simultaneously hold top State and Party positions the CCP ultimately maintains actual, authoritative policy-making and operational control over the armed forces. Military policy directives originate within in the Politburo or the Party CMC and become operational orders through the PLA's General Staff Department.¹⁰

PROMOTING SENIOR PLA OFFICERS

The Party's control of the military nomenklatura is absolutely vital to its bid to command the CMC. The size of the CMC is not specified and has fluctuated over the years, from as many as sixty-six members in the late-1970s, to a low of seven members in the mid-1990s. Current membership of the CMC is eleven members, predominantly military officers. Additionally, the duration of appointment to the CMC is not specified. Membership (size and personnel) has been adjusted in 1992, 1994, 1995, and 1999. More than 50 percent of current

⁹ Nan Li, "Organizational Changes Of the PLA, 1985-1997," *China Quarterly* 158 (June 1999): 322.

¹⁰ "People's Liberation Army (PLA)," *China Online*, May 24, 2001 [newspaper on-line]; Available from http://www.chinaonline.com/refer/ministry_profiles/c01043067.asp; Internet; Accessed 12 October 2001.

CMC members have been appointed since 1996,¹¹ enabling Jiang to replace older members with officers loyal to his patronage.¹²

Conceivably the Party can adjust the membership as it sees fit to ensure its objectives are met. After the 1989 Tiananmen incident, Zhao Ziyang was removed from the position of CMC chairman due to his unwillingness to support Deng Xiaoping's hard-line stance towards the protesters and was replaced by Jiang Zemin. In 1992, Deng purged the Yang brothers (Yang Shangkun, vice-chairman of the CMC, and his younger half-brother, Yang Baibing, secretary-general of the CMC and director of the PLA's General Political Department) and promoted long time supporters Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen as vice chairmen of the CMC. Both of these officers were regarded as strong Deng loyalists who lacked personal political motives.¹³ Their presence provided Jiang important backing as he assumed the position of CMC chairman. The appointments are significant in that both officers had already retired from service but they were called back to service to ensure critical military support for Jiang and by extension the Party.¹⁴

The authority to appoint senior military leaders further exemplifies the Party's control of the CMC. Jiang has been able to promote junior, more professional, technically component officers to senior positions utilizing

¹¹ Shambaugh, "The People's Liberation Army and the People's Republic at 50: Reform at Last," *China Quarterly* 159 (1999): 666.

¹² Shambaugh, "China's Military In Transition: Politics, Professionalism, Procurement and Power Projection," *China Quarterly* 146 (1996): 270.

¹³ You Ji, "Jiang Zemin's Command of the Military," *The China Journal* 45 (January 2000): 132.

¹⁴ Comments made by Professor Liu Xuecheng on previous paper concerning PLA activity in PRC politics. April 2001.

mandated retirement age limits. Slowly but steadily Jiang has built "a network of senior military personnel loyal to him and the new Communist Party leadership."¹⁵ While promotion guidelines stressing military expertise over political experience have been enacted, top military leaders are also CCP members as well.¹⁶ Although there are indications of increasing military autonomy from the Party, the Party continues to ensure that 'loyal' officers occupy the top positions. In 1994 and 1995, Jiang promoted an unprecedented 27 officers to the rank of Lieutenant General, ostensibly as a means to link their promotion and job security to his leadership.¹⁷

RETURNING THE PLA "BACK TO THE BARRACKS."

Deng Xiaoping expressed concern over the PLA's impressive political clout as early as 1973, when he recommended that Mao appoint new commanders to the Military Regions (MR).¹⁸ Deng's apprehension is hardly surprising given the fact that PLA officers constituted roughly 50 percent of the Central Committee of the 9th Party Congress in 1969.¹⁹ Was the Party in control of the gun or the gun in control of the Party? The primary objective of Deng's "back to the barracks" concept was to extricate the PLA from the political arena²⁰ and allow it to develop as a military force. This is not to imply that he envisioned or

¹⁵ Shambaugh, "China's New High Command," *China Review* Issue 9 (Spring 1998): 7.

¹⁶ Comments from Professor Liu Xuecheng, April 2001.

¹⁷ Shambaugh, "China's Military In Transition," 271.

¹⁸ Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993): 757.

¹⁹ Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army after Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 160.

²⁰ Shambaugh, "China's Military In Transition," 268.

expected a State military autonomous of Party leadership. Deng's goal was to create a "politically dependent but militarily independent PLA" by de-emphasizing the PLA's domestic, social and ideological roles.²¹ A 1984 rectification campaign targeted "pernicious influences" within the PLA that were held over from the Cultural Revolution. The Party reinforced the idea that any gains which resulted from actions conducted during the Cultural Revolution were illegitimate, specifically the PLA's rise in political prominence.²² The section on PLA representation in Party organizations will illustrate the resulting decline in the number of military members in political positions.

The eleven MR commanders of the also exercised tremendous political influence by means of the military assets under their authority. Party leaders' apprehension that military regions might develop into "independent kingdoms"²³ or political factions led to a 1985 reduction in the number of regions to seven. The smaller number of regions increased the size of each region as well as the amount of military forces controlled by each individual commander. While this appears to be at odds with the desire to reduce MR commanders' political power, the end result was in fact decreased political influence. The enlarged regions hampered attempts to consolidate political allies while the increase in military assets necessitated that commanders devote more time and energy to military concerns, indirectly furthering the professionalization of the officer corps.²⁴

²¹ Alistair Johnston, "Changing Army-Party Relations, 1979-1984," *Asian Survey* 24, no. 10 (October 1984): 1018-1020.

²² Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao*, 156.

²³ Shambaugh, "China's Post-Deng Military Leadership: New Faces, New Trends," Text of a speech given at Stanford University (April 1998): 7.

²⁴ Joffe, *The Chinese Army after Mao*, 156-160.

More importantly, however, a system of rotating MR commanders every few years further precludes the possibility an officer might build up personal loyalties among subordinates or regional political cadre. Deng's suggestion to rotate officers in these positions remains in continued use. Since 1996 all MR commanders and political commissars, as well as the leaders of the general departments, service branches and military universities have been assigned to new duty positions.²⁵

MAINTAINING INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATES AND THE POLITICAL WORK SYSTEM

As mentioned previously, the Party and PLA developed from, and for a period of time were, a single organization. The result is that one cannot accurately regard the CCP and PLA as separate entities.²⁶ The most important outgrowth of this closeness is the concept of 'interlocking directorates', which has led scholars in the past to regard the PLA as the "party in uniform."²⁷ In this tight knit atmosphere officers often had both military and political experience and the loyalty of officers was virtually unquestioned, though concerns did arise over the possibility of factional divisions. Data indicates that a number of factors such as increased education standards and regulations, which standardized promotion criteria, have broken down the interlocking directorate system at the lower levels of the PLA, specifically below the regional level. It is no longer possible to find military commanders concurrently serving as political commissar, indicating

²⁵ Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 666.

²⁶ Bickford, "Retrospective," 29.

²⁷ Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition," 268.

separate and distinct career patterns for both military and political officers. This distinction between professional military and political officers shows the continued evolution of the CCP-PLA relationship, which has witnessed alternating periods of either organization wielding the stronger hand.²⁸

The higher an officer reaches in the hierarchy however, the less clear the distinctions between Party and PLA. For while the CMC serves as the highest-level body of military representation to the Party, its representatives also serve as the Party's liaison to the military. Do senior officers on the CMC represent the interests of the Party or the army? Trends that indicate the existence of a professional officer corps in the PRC by default argue that military members of the CMC are increasingly apolitical and therefore represent PLA corporate interests. On the other hand, numerous comments by General Chi in support of Party leadership depict an officer corps clearly committed to Party political rhetoric and accommodating of the Party's desire to maintain control over the PLA.

The Party relies heavily on the "political work" system²⁹ to preserve proper ideological orientation in military personnel. Shortly after the Tiananmen incident, the Party initiated strong efforts to revive the PLA's internal party apparatus, which had weakened after years of increased stress on modernization and military training.³⁰ The primary goal of the parallel hierarchy of political committees and political commissars is to subject the military to "dual control –

²⁸ Bickford, "Retrospective," 30.

²⁹ M.V. Rappai, "Military in Post Deng China," *Strategic Analysis* 20, no. 4 (July 1997): 9.

³⁰ Harlan Jencks, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Tiananmen and After," *Problems of Communism* 21(May/June 1991): 20.

military control from higher command and political control from the Party committee at the same level.”³¹ Political commissars serve down to the company level of the PLA and political commissars hold higher rank than the military commander at the same level. The military commander is required to have the political commissar co-sign orders³² and even in purely military situations may be required to defer to the political commissar’s decision.³³ The political work system is the Party’s primary means for controlling the gun. This tightly centralized, top down system is designed to ensure compliance with orders and there have been very few instances of PLA units acting autonomously.³⁴

ENFORCING POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION

Political indoctrination is imposed on the PLA to secure PLA loyalty to the Party. The scope and scale of political work in the military has fluctuated but remains a continuous ongoing campaign.³⁵ Initially the Party stressed that military personnel should be ‘red’ and not ‘expert.’ Following the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution and the PLA’s subsequent lack of organization or semblance of military capability, Deng’s desire to remove the PLA from politics and the PLA’s modernization drive pushed ideology the back burner. The consequences of reduced ideological emphasis in the PLA became evident to Party leaders in 1989

³¹ Zheng, 241.

³² Nan, “Organizational Changes Of the PLA,” 334.

³³ Guo Sujian, *Post-Mao China: From Totalitarianism to Authoritarianism?* (New York: Praeger, 2000), 88.

³⁴ Joffe, “Party Army Relations In China – Retrospect And Prospect,” *China Quarterly* 146 (1996): 300.

³⁵ Shambaugh, “China’s Military in Transition,” 274.

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³⁴ Joffe, “Party Army Relations In China – Retrospect And Prospect,” *China Quarterly* 146 (1996): 300.

³⁵ Shambaugh, “China’s Military in Transition,” 274.

when the PLA's performance, though ultimately supporting Party directives, can only be characterized as hesitant and somewhat reluctant.

On the heels of the Tiananmen massacre, events in Eastern Europe and the coup attempt in the USSR underscored a critical need to intensify efforts to guarantee correct ideological and political thought. Programs such as the 'absolute loyalty to party' campaign were launched in earnest to strengthen the PLA's neglected Party committees, political commissar system and discipline inspection program.³⁶ Deng and Jiang's revitalized ideological campaigns sought to "encourage a correct political direction for the army." Husbanded by CMC members and half-brothers Yang Shangkun and Yang Baibing, programs to re-politicize the PLA emphasized the need for the military to lead the PRC in the "construction of Marxist values." The political nature of Jiang Zemin's 'Five Point Edict' is clearly evident in the directive that the PLA must exhibit the qualities of "superior work style; strong discipline; guaranteed effectiveness."³⁷ At the Ninth National People's Congress he specifically addressed PLA deputies, reminding them that the military

...must adhere to the leading power of the CCP over the military, guaranteeing that the army must be at conformity with the Party Central Committee any time and on any occasion, and subject itself to the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Commission in all its actions.³⁸

The 1992 purge of the Yang brothers from the CMC in favor of Generals Liu and Zhang signaled a slight reprieve from the Party's enforced political

³⁶ Ibid., 274.

³⁷ Willy Wo Lap-Lam, *The Era of Jiang Zemin* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1999), 157. The other edicts were to "pass muster; be strong in combat."

³⁸ Guo, 88.

obedience. Senior PLA leaders preoccupied with military modernization indicated their displeasure with the manner in which political campaigns were carried out by strongly supporting the removal of the Yangs.³⁹ However, the Party did not completely curtail efforts to inculcate proper ideological orientation in the military. In 1996 another movement was launched to promote ideological and political study alongside military doctrine, with an emphasis on soldiers being both 'red and expert.' This iteration of the ideological crusade utilized 'sealed off management' (restricting troops in barracks to conduct mandatory political study) to promote loyalty to Jiang and the Party.

General Chi Haotian, Politburo Central Committee member, vice chairman of the CMC and minister of National Defense firmly supported the efforts, declaring that the PLA must place "ideological and political work...at the top of the army's agenda."⁴⁰ As recently as July 2001 General Chi reaffirmed the PLA's support of the Party's absolute leadership over the army during a reception marking the PLA's 74th anniversary. He emphasized Jiang's recent call to intensify "efforts to improve the political education of our commanders and soldiers so that they will have lofty ideas and firm faith" in order to "ensure that the entire PLA will ... maintain the authority of the CCP Central Committee and the CMC with Comrade Jiang Zemin at the core, and forever obey the command

³⁹ Joffe, "Party Army Relations In China," 305.

⁴⁰ Lam, *The Era of Jiang Zemin*, 157-158.

of the Party.”⁴¹ It appears that senior PLA leaders share the Party leadership’s belief that the “gun must be held by people totally loyal to the Party.”⁴²

CONTROLLING THE MILITARY BUDGET AND DISBANDING PLA, INC

Another tactic the Party utilizes to increase positive control over the military is strengthening the PLA’s financial dependence on the CCP. Designating the military as the lowest priority of the Four Modernizations resulted in declining budgets. In 1986 defense spending accounted for 6 percent of the Gross National Product, down from approximately 12 percent in 1979.⁴³ Coupled with the manpower intensive ‘people’s war’ doctrine, inadequate financial support resulted in a PLA that had devolved into a technologically deficient military, armed with weaponry lagging well behind other nations. Authorized in the mid-1980s to provide much needed funding modernization, PLA ventures into the economic sphere rapidly burgeoned into a sprawling empire consisting of some 20,000 enterprises, amassing 12 to 30 billion yuan (roughly \$1.5 to 4 billion) annually by the early 1990s, according to CIA estimates.⁴⁴ Riding high during the economic boom ‘PLA, Inc.’ even established numerous joint ventures with foreign investors and began to invest overseas.⁴⁵

⁴¹ “Party Leadership over Army Never to be Shaken: Chi,” *People’s Daily Online*, August 01, 2001; Available from http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200107/31/eng20010731_76199.html; Internet; Accessed 16 September 2001.

⁴² Lam, *The Era of Jiang Zemin*, 159.

⁴³ Mel Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China’s Security: The New Roles of the Military* (Boulder: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1998), 163.

⁴⁴ Bickford, “Regularization,” 473.

⁴⁵ “PLA: Military To Quit Business,” *The Financial Times*, [journal on-line]; Available from <http://specials.ft.com/ln/fts-surveys/country/sc76b2.htm>; Accessed 29 June 2001.

Despite the obvious financial benefits, it became obvious to senior PLA and Party leaders that business pursuits were disruptive to the chain of command and training, degrading military capabilities. Military involvement in smuggling, meanwhile, challenged Party and State priorities and undermined the customs administration and tax authorities, while illegal weapons arms sales conflicted with the civilian leadership's foreign-policy goals.⁴⁶ The business ventures proved to be a double-edged sword: providing much needed capital to finance PLA modernization efforts while fostering an environment that hindered the training necessary to properly integrate and effectively utilize advanced weaponry.

A 1994 Party directive restricting PLA business ventures below the Group level and accompanying anti-corruption drives proved unsuccessful. Party reluctance to forcefully demand PLA disengagement from economic pursuits can be attributed in part to the PLA's historical legacy of contributing to economic development, as well as Jiang's still tentative command of the PLA.⁴⁷ Smuggling, gunrunning, embezzlement, greed and mismanagement continued virtually unabated to the consternation of Party and government officials. A high-level smuggling scandal involving a GPD corporation proved to be the catalyst needed for the Party to reign in the PLA.

In July 1998 Jiang ordered the military to divest itself of all business holdings. To assuage the military's loss of income, the Party approved an

⁴⁶ Susan V. Lawrence and Bruce Gilley, "Bitter Harvest," *Far East Economic Review*, April 29, 1999 [journal on-line]; Available from http://www.feer.com/1999/9904_29/p22china.html; Accessed 13 July 2001.

⁴⁷ Bickford, "Retrospective," 27.

additional 13 percent budget increase.⁴⁸ This was a considerable boost in the defense budget, which averaged an annual increase of 15 percent from 1994 through 1997.⁴⁹ However the increased funding could not adequately compensate for lost business revenue, and military leaders voiced their concerns. The negotiated divestiture regulations allowed the PLA to retain the two largest conglomerates that primarily produce military use items, and the GAD now manages the weapons sales departments of the highly diversified Poly Group.⁵⁰ The Party's primary concern with the PLA business ventures was one of loyalty to the Party. Removing the military's independent revenue allows the Party to reestablish accountability of the PLA. The PLA is now dependent upon the Party for its annual defense budget, with stipulations in the 1997 National Defense Law that require budgetary increases to keep pace with national economic growth.⁵¹

It is important to note the political environment under which Jiang was willing to directly challenge the PLA's financial autonomy. Although Party concerns about the PLA's business activities arose early on, Jiang's first attempt to curtail the military's thirst for profits in 1994 proved weak and ineffectual, little more than pleas for the military to set an example society would emulate.⁵² At that time, Deng loyalist Liu Huaqing served as vice-chairman of the CMC and was a member of the PBSC. He retired in September 1997 and was replaced by

⁴⁸ Lawrence and Gilley.

⁴⁹ Bruce Gilley, *Tiger on The Brink: Jiang Zemin and China's New Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 226.

⁵⁰ Lawrence and Gilley.

⁵¹ You, 134-135.

⁵² Dennis J. Blasko, "A New PLA Force Structure," in James C. Mulvenon and Richard H Yang, eds., *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999), 259.

Jiang supporter Zhang Wannian as vice-chairman of the CMC. However, no PLA officer was appointed to the PBSC during the 15th Central Committee, the first time since the PRC's establishment that the PBSC did not have a military member. The lack of PLA representation at the highest tier of Party leadership exemplifies the military's subordination to Party leadership. Jiang's willingness to order the divestiture indicated supreme confidence that PLA leadership would obey the directive.⁵³

INCREASING STATE CONTROL OF THE PLA?

While the Party continues to stress the military's subservience to Party leadership, there are indications that Deng's earlier efforts to separate the Party from the State have proven moderately successful. In addition to approving CMC membership, the NPC also has the power to recall or remove its members. As discussed earlier, although the Constitution specifies that the CMC is responsible to the NPC, the highest organ of State power, the Party is not constrained by this framework. The Party Central Committee meets prior to the convening of the NPC, issuing policy directives and making decisions that are generally duly passed by the NPC. This fuels speculation that the NPC is little more than a rubber stamp organization. However, the formality of requiring legislation to be passed in the NPC is important. The formal process seems to indicate greater legitimatization of the NPC as a source of State power.⁵⁴ In recent years there have been reports of instances when the NPC was unwilling to blindly accept Party

⁵³ Tai, "Influence," 70.

⁵⁴ Yin, Chapter VI.

directions, leading to negotiations over proposed laws, openly voting against important laws or the rejection of CCP nominations for provincial governors.⁵⁵

Despite the ambiguous nature of the constitution regarding who legally commands the military, the 1997 National Defense Law clearly delineates greater *State* responsibility for defense matters. Specifically the State Council is charged with: developing principles, policies and administrative laws on national defense construction; administering funds for national defense construction; administering the mobilization of the armed forces; overseeing national defense education; and directing work in building the military and conscription.⁵⁶ This relationship is predominantly based upon economic and administrative ties, as the CMC maintains operational control of the military. However, if divestiture of 'PLA, Inc.' has resulted in greater financial dependence, then logically the State, as the source of military funding, is the beneficiary of the increased dependence. The State's proposed budget for 2001 included funds to raise salaries 25 percent and provided an additional \$1 billion for the purchase of foreign weapons technology.⁵⁷

The terminology used in the National Defense Law enacted by the 5th session of the 8th NPC subordinates the PLA to the State, referencing the State thirty-nine times compared with a single mention of the Party.⁵⁸ While this single

⁵⁵ Minxin Pei, "Democratization In The Greater China Region," *Access Asia Review* 1, no. 2 (July 1999): 31.

⁵⁶ Tai, "Influence," 85-88.

⁵⁷ "People's Liberation Army (PLA)," *China Online*, May 24, 2001 [newspaper on-line]; Available from http://www.chinaonline.com/refer/ministry_profiles/c01043067.asp; Internet; Accessed 27 June 2001.

⁵⁸ Bickford "Retrospective," 44-45.

Party reference states that the “armed forces are subject to leadership of the CCP”⁵⁹ the continued reinforcement of the State’s role in military affairs is very suggestive of a changed perception of the military’s relationship to both State and Party. This subtle but fundamental change in CCP-PLA relations⁶⁰ is echoed in the White Paper titled “China’s National Defense in 2000.” This document makes the singular claim that the “armed forces adhere to the absolute leadership of the Communist Party”⁶¹ while persistently citing the leading role of *State* organizations. Specifically the “CMC of the PRC directs and assumes command of the nation’s armed forces” while the “Ministry of National Defense under the State Council directs and administers national defense work.”⁶²

It is much too early to declare that the PLA is a State army⁶³ based on these documents, but the trend towards greater institutionalization and a legal basis for State control of the military bodes well for the future, especially when one considers indications of increased professionalism within the PLA. Additionally, though the CCP may actually control the PLA through the CMC, the PLA’s *legal* subordination to the State CMC makes it a servant of the State,⁶⁴ though the PLA does not yet seem to fully appreciate that fact.

⁵⁹ Tai, “Influence,” Footnote number 10.

⁶⁰ Bickford, “Retrospective,” 45.

⁶¹ “China’s National Defense in 2000,” White Paper published by Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, (October 2000):12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶³ Shambaugh, “Reform at Last,” 666.

⁶⁴ Jeremy Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance On Parade: Civil-Military Relations In Transition,” *China Quarterly* 143 (September 1995): 798.

SUMMARY

The CCP has placed a great deal of emphasis and attention in its efforts to retain command of the military, reluctant to allow the PLA to develop as an autonomous entity. The Party's leadership over the military is exemplified by the direct control of PLA daily operations through the CMC and the enforcement of ideological study and political loyalty through political indoctrination campaigns. The PLA's loss of representation on the Politburo Standing Committee hampers the military's ability to directly influence Party policy making at the highest level of politics.

In almost every instance, the PLA has accepted measures that strengthen the Party's position of command over China's armed forces. The PLA's highest ranked leader, though not promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee as was widely expected, publicly supports the Party's continued leadership of the military and the need to enforce political loyalty. This support can be partially explained by Jiang Zemin's power to appoint and dismiss senior military officers. The PLA's acquiescence to the Party also results from the political standing of senior military officers as ranking Party members. The interests of the PLA are inherently tied to the Party's. However, PLA support for the ouster of the Yang brothers signified the military's annoyance with intrusive, politically focused campaigns that detract from military pursuits.

The only instance when the PLA expressed strong reluctance to directly follow Party directives was the unwillingness to relinquish certain portions of the PLA business empire. Not only did the PLA maneuver to retain direct

management of lucrative military industrial facilities, but military leaders' pressure also induced the Party and State to provide a rather large increase in military funding. While military leaders support the Party and State's development goals, they were unwilling to fully surrender the tremendous fiscal assets they had acquired. Despite the Party's domination of the military, the PLA retains enough leverage to force the Party to negotiate on interests PLA leaders feel are too valuable to subordinate to Party interests.

PLA PARTICIPATION IN PARTY AND STATE ORGANIZATIONS

The previous section demonstrates that the Party appreciates the necessity of maintaining a leadership position over the armed forces as a prerequisite to preserving the CCP's rule. The PLA is the only organization possessing the power and organizational skills able to pose a serious challenge to the Party. The military is not only perceived as a possible challenger to Party leadership, but is an active participant in the political process. The military represents one of the three pillars of the Chinese power structure⁶⁵ and any discussion of the political system must include the PLA. PLA officers serve in political bodies other than the CMC, influencing decisions well beyond traditional military concerns. As the Party's control of the PLA has been stronger or weaker during different periods, the PLA's direct involvement in political affairs has undergone similar cycles of growth and decline. More importantly however, the Party has always made the decisions on this matter, which the military has obeyed.

⁶⁵ Tai, "Influence," 61.

PLA REPRESENTATION IN PARTY AND STATE ORGANS

Numerically the trend of PLA participation in political organizations is one of decline. The highpoint of PLA representation in the Party was in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the military stepped into the political fray to restore order during the Cultural Revolution. The 9th Politburo with 21 positions included 10 PLA members, and 2 of 4 alternate members were also from the PLA. The 11th Politburo was also composed of approximately 50 percent PLA members, occupying 12 of 23 seats. Representation in the Central Committee in 1969 also constituted 50 percent. However, the true extent of the PLA's political potency was most conspicuous at the provincial level. Upon reestablishing the 29 provincial governments, 21 PLA generals and political commissars subsequently served in the positions of Party First Secretary or Party chairman.⁶⁶ It is little wonder then that Deng Xiaoping felt the need to diminish the PLA's role in the political sphere.

By 1983 only 4 of the 29 provincial Party committees were chaired by PLA officers, and 3 of those 4 were political commissars rather than military commanders. In 1985, PLA representation in the Politburo dropped to a mere 3 of 20 members when 6 generals were retired.⁶⁷ The strongest indicator of the PLA's reduced formal power in the political process is the PLA's lack of direct representation on the PBSC since 1997. Although it was widely expected that General Zhang Wannian would assume the vacancy left when Luo Ruiqing

⁶⁶ Jurgen Domes, *The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 118-121.

⁶⁷ Bickford, "Retrospective," 14.

retired, he was not appointed to the seat. For the first time ever the PLA is not directly represented in the Politburo Standing Committee, and only 2 members in the Politburo are PLA officers. PLA membership in the Party Central Committee has averaged approximately 20 to 25 percent⁶⁸ since the mid-1980s, down from the highest level of 50 percent in the mid-1970s.

The reduction in the PLA's non-military roles initiated by Deng's reform movement is the primary factor in the military's diminished presence in Party organizations. The "back to the barracks" campaign stressed reduced political activity in favor of military focused endeavors that would enhance modernization efforts. Mao's emphasis on political pursuits had severely hampered PLA efforts to advance the military's capabilities and Deng hoped to reorient the PLA on professional military objectives. The lack of resistance to relinquishing political positions to civilian leaders speaks volumes for the military's sharing of Deng's vision for military development and its commitment to Party leadership.⁶⁹

Reduced political visibility in terms of representation in various governing bodies does necessarily equate to a lack of, or marginalization of the military's capacity for political participation. The complementary nature of the Party-army relationship not only helps ensure military subservience to civilian leadership; it also necessitates inclusion of the military in political affairs. One needs only consider the role of the PLA in securing the CCP victory against the Nationalist government as well as the few instances of succession that have occurred since

⁶⁸ Gilley, 309.

⁶⁹ Joffe, "The Chinese Army After Mao," 161-163.

Mao's death to realize this.⁷⁰ Military support was vital in the arrest of the Gang of Four, backing Deng's subsequent return to power, and most recently in shoring up Jiang's succession. Widespread speculation that Jiang will retire from the positions of PRC President and Party secretary general while retaining chairmanship of the CMC is strong corroboration that Party leaders fully understand the military's ability to influence political affairs.

In addition to membership in Party organs, the PLA also maintains a noticeable presence in the State government. PLA delegates occupy approximately 10 percent of all NPC seats.⁷¹ The military, numbering approximately 3 million soldiers, is represented at the rate of approximately 1 delegate per 10,000 soldiers. In comparison cities and provinces are represented at rate of 1 delegate per 100,000 and 1 delegate per 800,000 citizens, respectively. For example, during the 6th NPC held in 1983 the PLA delegation numbered 267 members, while China's most populous province, Sichuan sent 202 delegates.⁷² As with Party bodies, the PLA is vastly over-represented in the NPC. It is interesting to note that PLA delegates are the only members of the NPC whose common bond is based upon career rather than regional interests.

THE PLA AS AN INTEREST GROUP?

Discussing the PLA in terms of an interest group pursuing goals different from those of the Party invokes visions of 'factionalism.' However, this initial reaction is misleading because the divergence of interests that exists is not over

⁷⁰ Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition," 267.

⁷¹ Zheng, 244.

⁷² Yin, 153.

the direction or legitimacy of the CCP's leadership. The overall impression is that the PLA willingly, though perhaps grudgingly, accepts civilian leadership⁷³ but harbors a sense of resentment against intrusive political control, which is seen as Party interference in military affairs.⁷⁴ Enthusiastic PLA support in ousting the Yang brothers clearly expressed the military's distaste for excessive political emphasis.

Rather, what differences exist stem largely from a variance between PLA interest in developing a modern, technologically capable army and the Party's desire to guarantee the military's political loyalty. Military leaders are acutely aware that past emphasis on politicization severely retarded modernization efforts, and in many instances set them back even further. At the same time, Party officials seeking to advance economic development without associated political reforms recall the military's hesitation to follow Party orders in 1989. Deng's 'back to the barracks' campaign was too successful in removing the military from the political sphere and proved detrimental to the military's absolute loyalty to Party leadership. There is no evidence to suggest enmity between Party and army leaders, but certainly adequate indications that the military is capable of influencing policy making at the highest levels to suit its purposes.

Although the idea of professionalism in the PLA is addressed in the following section, one component needs to be discussed here. One of the traits of professionalism per the Huntington model is a sense of corporateness in an

⁷³ Bickford, "Retrospective," 7.

⁷⁴ Joffe, "Party Army Relations in China," 305.

organization.⁷⁵ Modernization, the accompanying phenomenon of professionalism, and the defense of China's territorial integrity and sovereignty appear to have captured the attention of PLA leaders and provide a common sense of purpose for the military. This is not to suggest that all PLA leaders are in agreement over the direction of military affairs, but in general the PLA is united in its relationship with the Party and government.⁷⁶

It has been noted that high-ranking PLA officers are Party members, and therefore are supportive of Party policy as long as they do not adversely affect the PLA's ambitions. Reports have surfaced of high-level military leaders attending Politburo meetings even though they are not Politburo members. While lacking the authority to vote, their presence served as a strong signal of PLA interest in the affairs being discussed.⁷⁷ We've already noted the emergence of increased State-military ties, and there are indications the PLA uses the NPC as a forum to lobby for its interests.⁷⁸ In 2000 PLA delegates filed a record 18 motions, called for greater civilian input in building an early air warning system, criticized the long standing belief that army modernization must be subservient to economic development, and publicly expressed dissatisfaction with a 12.7 percent budget increase.⁷⁹ This behavior points out one of the results of reduced politicization of the PLA, a deepening distinction between political and military leaders.

⁷⁵ Bickford, "Retrospective," 7.

⁷⁶ Joffe, "How Much Does the PLA Make Foreign Policy," in David S. Goodman and Gerald Segal, eds., *China Rising: Nationalism and Interdependence* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 53.

⁷⁷ Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition," 272.

⁷⁸ Tai, "Influence," 89.

⁷⁹ Lam, "PLA Fights For Larger Share Of Resources Monday," *South China Morning Post*, March 13, 2000; Available from http://special.scmp.com/npc2000/Article/FullText.asp_ArticleID-20000313025110449.html; Internet; Accessed 18 July 2001.

A corresponding development is the existence of distinct career fields for military commanders and political officers. The newer generation of military leaders tends to have limited experience in political affairs, and in a sense is generally less politically inclined. This is also influenced by the reduced PLA representation in higher-level Party bodies. Another important aspect of career differentiation is a reduction of personal, informal ties between political leaders and military officers. Mao and Deng both demonstrated the strength of personal loyalty in commanding the PLA. Mao's domination of Chinese politics, regardless of the position and title he held, is undisputed. Deng Xiaoping was able to assert control due to his many years of military leadership and the resulting lifelong friendships and networks.

This condition has been altered through generational changes as new leaders take office. Younger leaders did not experience the hardships and resultant bonding that civil war era cadre underwent during the struggle to establish the PRC and the strength of *guanxi* or 'relations' in the PLA is less prevalent than in the past. The result is a greater affiliation with other members of the military rather than with Party officials.⁸⁰ Party leaders' recognition of this was demonstrated by Deng's political maneuvers to ensure a smooth succession for Jiang, specifically retaining General Liu on the CMC and PBSC. Many analysts had initially predicted that Jiang's lack of military experience would severely hamper, if not prevent him from leading the PLA. Deng was fully aware Jiang lacked the 'stature' necessary to successfully command the PLA merely by his

⁸⁰ Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 666

appointment as CMC chairman. Jiang immediately displayed an interest in military affairs, visiting numerous PLA bases and facilities in order to nurture the support of high-ranking officers.⁸¹

A critical factor when considering the current political system is the mutual dependence between new generation political and military leaders. The new crop of PLA leaders' lack of political experience directly mirrors Jiang and other Party leaders' lack of expertise in military affairs.⁸² The result is a system of 'consensus leadership' whereby decisions are made through more institutional methods with a reduction of personal ties.⁸³ Jiang's power is built on a broad base of separate interest groups. As such Jiang rules primarily through his institutional positions rather than informal or personal ties. These institutional positions are supported by other sources of power such as the PLA in the sense that these sources provide conditional support as long as Jiang continues to make special appeals to other interest groups.⁸⁴ For example, Jiang's initial deference to senior generals on important military matters granted PLA leaders a sense of autonomy in military affairs. A decade later he is undoubtedly the single most powerful political figure in China, having adeptly won the support of the military and subsequently using this support to enhance his political power within the Party.⁸⁵

The term 'consensus leadership' implies that China is developing bureaucratic pluralism, intentional or not. Jiang has been forced to accept

⁸¹ Zheng, 249.

⁸² Joffe, "Party Army Relations in China," 310.

⁸³ Tai, "The Influence of the Gun," 90.

⁸⁴ Joffe, "How Much Does the PLA Make Foreign Policy," 56.

⁸⁵ You, "Jiang Zemin's Command of the Military," 134.

compromise to further his agenda, seeking to curry favor with various 'groups' at different times. Similarly, Jiang has adjusted his support for varying PLA causes to ensure continued support. He has alternately championed the causes of ideology and Party loyalty, economic endeavors, professionalism, modernization, protection of territorial integrity, and criticism of corruption.

Accomplishing the task of 'army building in a new era' requires Jiang to engage in consensus politics.⁸⁶ The PLA likewise is an active participant. PLA compliance with the divestiture directive would not have been accomplished without compromise. Because military modernization requires substantial funding and budget increases, retaining limited control of armament related corporations ensures the means to continue research and weapons development. The fact that funding is ultimately provided through State channels indicates the PLA's greater relative institutional autonomy and perhaps promising signs of State control. At the very least, the PLA seems to enjoy increased autonomy in military affairs, though it can't be considered a distinct organization apart from the Party.⁸⁷

THE PLA IN FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE

Another of Huntington's indicators of professionalism is responsibility, in the sense that the military provides security for the State, serves in an advisory role, and implements *State* decisions.⁸⁸ The second aspect, serving in an advisory role, is important here to our discussion of the military's involvement at the highest levels of policy formulation. China's national defense policy is expressed

⁸⁶ Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition," 271-272.

⁸⁷ Shambaugh, "Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China," 42.

⁸⁸ Bickford, "Retrospective," 2.

in terms of "safeguarding State sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security, and has always been working hard for a peaceful international and favorable peripheral environment."⁸⁹ The Foreign Ministry and the PLA are the primary instruments for achieving these goals. Interaction between the PLA and the Foreign Ministry in developing China's foreign policy and national defense decisions highlights the PLA's ability to influence national issues.

We have already broached the subject of greater differentiation between the roles of military and civilian leaders. Civilian leaders' lack of experience in military matters and an increased sense of PLA corporateness allow the PLA to play a considerable and increasing role in shaping national security objectives while providing strategic analysis and intelligence to civilian leaders.⁹⁰ As the dividing line between military and civilian spheres becomes clearer and more defined than in the past, military leaders are more comfortable in assuming a leading role in guiding national defense policy. Party concern would arise if and when the Party perceived that the PLA oversteps its 'advisory role' and directly challenges the Party's leadership.⁹¹

The PLA's influence began to rise in 1987 with a decrease in the level of participation by Party 'elders' in daily governance. The events in Tiananmen and the subsequent refocusing on ideology temporarily halted the PLA's escalating influence. By 1995, events in the Taiwan Straits signaled that the PLA was

⁸⁹ "China's National Defense in 2000," 3.

⁹⁰ Michael Swaine, "The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy: Leaderships, Structures and Processes," in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 97-129.

⁹¹ Bickford, "Retrospective," 27-28.

capable of actively guiding the PRC's foreign policy actions. Tension between the PLA and Foreign Ministry was reflected in the wide spectrum of actions undertaken by China, from outright accommodation to bellicose rhetoric, missile launches, and extended military exercises. A lack of involvement by the 'elders' enabled the PLA to successfully implement a hard-line approach towards Taiwan.

The PLA also heavily influences PRC relations with the U.S., England, and Japan. The PLA is a vocal proponent of bilateral relations between nations and advises the Foreign Ministry to reject multilateral security agreements. PLA officials are actively involved in international arms sales agreements due to the military's operation of weapons producing industries. Military officers' opinions also carry a great deal of weight concerning China's policies on nuclear weapons and nuclear non-proliferation. As the flag bearer of China's defense, the military urges Jiang to be assertive in protecting Chinese national interests.⁹²

Consensus leadership is evident in the military's realization of influence through a complicated interaction with the civilian leadership. Civilian leaders strive to retain the upper hand by alternately appeasing, standing firm, and trying to dilute the military's views and pressures. They attempt to retain the upper hand through a mixture of personal persuasion, negotiating bureaucratic interests, and direct control over formal organs and policy channels. At present the system operates using 'new rules of the game,' which are under development and yet to be institutionalized. "Formal systematic channels exist alongside decreasing personal and informal relations," requiring military-civilian consultation in order

⁹² Shambaugh, "China's Military in transition," 272-4.

to make decisions.⁹³ It should be clarified the PLA does not dictate its wishes, but rather senior PLA leaders collaborate and consult with their civilian counterparts, although on issues that are clearly defense-related the military is more vocal in arguing that its views be accepted.⁹⁴

SUMMARY

The PLA continues to be an important pillar of the Chinese power structure even though its influence now is exercised largely through informal channels. In some ways the military has come full circle in terms of its political involvement. Established as a pure fighting force, it served as the acting government following the Cultural Revolution, later arrested the Gang of Four to pave the way for Deng's return to politics, and has finally effectively returned to the barracks. At all times the PLA has displayed a commitment to civilian leadership and has not objected to moderate, non-obtrusive political control that allows the military to direct military affairs.⁹⁵

The reduced political involvement allows the PLA to dedicate its resources to the pursuit of military modernization and has bred a strong sense of parochial PLA interests. While accepting the Party's decision to exclude the PLA from the Politburo Standing Committee, military leaders have grown more willing to champion their own causes. The presence of military officers in the Politburo is a brash display of the military's growing confidence to exploit the power inherent in its role of supporting the Party. Serving as China's security experts, PLA

⁹³ Swaine, *The Role Of The Chinese Military In National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1996), ix-xii.

⁹⁴ Swaine, "The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy," 97-129.

⁹⁵ Joffe, "The Chinese Army After Mao," 169.

pressure has been very influential in guiding China's foreign policy and relations with regional and international competitors. Because of Jiang's reliance on bureaucratic pluralism, the PLA finds itself in an unprecedented position to influence the highest tiers of policy making.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Joffe, "How much does the PLA Make Foreign Policy," 56.

PROFESSIONALISM IN THE PLA

One indicator of the PLA's reaction to the Party is the degree to which the military is a professional organization. Experts in this field, Huntington in particular, say that the qualities that define professionalism are applied universally, regardless of a nation's political system. What defines a professional officer in the U.S. also defines one in China. Two of Huntington's qualifications, responsibility to the State and a sense of corporateness have been discussed briefly to clarify the degree of PLA participation in political affairs. They will be revisited here as well, though this section will focus on the third qualification of professionalism, expertise in military affairs.⁹⁷

The greatest single factor impacting the PLA's level of military expertise and professionalism is modernization. In the past the PLA was required to subordinate military interests to political interests and economic development, which severely curtailed military development. For instance, the Party deployed the PLA during the Cultural Revolution to resolve leadership conflict, displace politics leaders, and supplant Party and Government institutions, which greatly expanded the military's political role.⁹⁸ The continuous involvement of the PLA in non-military roles has proven greatly distracting to PLA leaders, preventing them from directing military resources and attention towards military goals. As a result, PLA strides towards professionalization of the officer corps have been

⁹⁷ Bickford, "Retrospective," 5-6.

⁹⁸ Parris H. Chang, "Evolution of the Party Since 1949," in Yu-Ming Shaw, ed., *Power and Policy in the PRC* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 63.

inseparable from the pursuit of modernization.⁹⁹ Concurrent and supporting developments in modernization include force structure, education, and laws and regulations, which will provide greater evidence of developing military expertise.

MODERNIZATION

Military modernization has consistently been subordinated to China's economic goals. Much as post-World War II Japan capitalized on the presence of U.S. military forces in order to establish a modern industrial nation, China relied on the size of its population for deterrent effect. The presence of U.S. forces in Japan and the protection they afforded enabled Japan to forgo reconstituting its military forces and direct all available resources towards economic progress. Similarly China's continued reliance upon the concept of 'people's war' that was developed while conducting guerilla operations against Nationalist forces allowed the PRC to pursue economic growth as the top national priority.

The basic idea of 'people's war' was to conduct protracted, defensive warfare, relying on the PLA's overwhelming number of soldiers to offset the invading force's technological superiority. In a sense the concept itself stifled the modernization drive. Because the stress was on the quantity of soldiers and weapons over quality, the PLA lacked a strong *need* to pursue modernization.¹⁰⁰ The two activities that produced the most detrimental effects on modernization efforts were the Cultural Revolution and the Four Modernizations drive. The PLA was not immune from the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution, and what limited professionalism had existed previously was severely retarded by the military's

⁹⁹ Joffe, "Party Army Relations in China," 300.

¹⁰⁰ Bickford, "Regularization," 462.

political involvement, along with degradation in discipline and weakening of unit cohesion. The Four Modernizations campaign did not directly intrude upon the military institution, but PLA development initially stagnated as the lowest of the PRC's national priorities. While the PLA's budget remained virtually constant in dollar value, it dropped considerably as a percentage of national expenditure.¹⁰¹ Deng and Party leaders recognized the need for military modernization, but were justifiably concerned about the expenses involved and the dangers inherent in relying on imported weapons. Assessing that China did not face an imminent security threat, they opted to pursue weapons modernization through a "slow process that relies primarily on indigenous efforts and has to be preceded by economic and technological development."¹⁰² Deng hoped to simultaneously develop a self-sufficient defense industry while improving existing weapons.¹⁰³

China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979 highlighted the PLA's glaring deficiencies. Though the PLA China maintained a numerical advantage, the "Chinese ground forces lacked all the major attributes of a modern fighting force, such as firepower, mobility, advanced communications and logistics."¹⁰⁴ Cognizant of these shortcomings but fettered by economic realities and the guiding policies of the Four Modernizations, PLA leaders concentrated on upgrading and improving existing systems. Considerable progress was made

¹⁰¹ Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao*, 35.

¹⁰² Ibid., 180.

¹⁰³ Paul H. Godwin, "Compensating For Deficiencies: Doctrinal Evolution in the Chinese people's Liberation Army: 1978-1999," in James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, eds., *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), 89.

¹⁰⁴ Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao*, 95.

through the 1980s but China's armed forces continued to rely on a defense-oriented doctrine stressing manpower versus technology, though more out of necessity than desire. The impressive accuracy, destructive power, and superiority of coalition weaponry during the 1991 Gulf War and the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia impressed upon PLA leaders the validity of smaller, technologically advanced and technically proficient forces.¹⁰⁵ In order to develop such a force, China has streamlined its force structure, implemented changes in the military education system, and standardized military regulations.

By all estimates China has made tremendous advances in weapons capabilities. However, despite the increased recognition of the importance for modernizing, there is not yet an intensive program to meet the PLA's needs. At present the strategy is one of introducing weapons systems in piecemeal fashion based upon the PLA's capability requirement priorities.¹⁰⁶ China's ambitious modernization program is still in the initial stages. The vast gap between doctrinal developments and actual PLA capabilities indicate it will be quite some time before the PLA transforms itself into a modern military able to fight 'local wars under high technology conditions.'¹⁰⁷

The slow pace of the modernization effort highlights the limitations on the PLA's vision for the future. First and foremost, it is apparent the indigenous arms industry is incapable of producing the advanced technology weapon systems that

¹⁰⁵ Bickford "Retrospective," 25.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 277.

¹⁰⁷ Scott M. Leeb, "China And The 21st Century," in *Strength Through Cooperation: Military Forces In The Asia-Pacific Region*; Available from <http://Www.Ndu.Edu/Inss/Books/Stcch4.Html>; Internet; Accessed 24 July 2001.

the military wants. The resultant purchases of limited foreign weapons (primarily Russian aircraft and naval vessels) conflict with the government's stated desire for a self-sufficient arms industry. Despite upgrades to existing weapons, aircraft, and naval vessels, many are employed well beyond their anticipated service life. As a result many systems are being retired at a rate higher than the PLA's capacity to acquire sufficient replacements. Moreover, the advanced systems that have been purchased from Russia are not comparable to similar U.S. systems in service in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The handful of modern systems presently in the PLA inventory has not dramatically improved the PLA's capabilities, in large due to the difficulty of integrating advanced systems into PLA operations and tactics.¹⁰⁸ This indicates that leaders have been unable to displace the Maoist belief that mass is superior to quality and that the level of technical expertise required to effectively employ advanced weapons probably does not yet exist.¹⁰⁹

Shortcomings in PLA field training are closely associated with modernization shortcomings and education problems. Continued reliance on low-tech weaponry appears to inhibit the ability of many officers to envision the future battlefield. Certainly the inability to field advanced weapons and train with them prevents soldiers from fully understanding the advantages of high-tech warfare. At the same time, commanders tend to regard advanced weapons that have been fielded as 'ornaments' and fail to integrate them into exercises. Consequently

¹⁰⁸ Frank W Moore, "China's Military Capabilities," (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Defense & Disarmament Studies June 2000); Available from <http://www.comw.org/cmp/fulltext/iddschina.html>; Internet; Accessed 9 September 2001.

¹⁰⁹ Leeb.

training continues to concentrate on the close battlefield within reach of older weapons and fails to appreciate the importance of fighting deep, against the enemy's command, control, communications and intelligence capability.¹¹⁰ Recognition of these deficiencies led the CMC to issue an 'operational ordinance of a new generation' in January 1999. This regulation seeks to prepare the PLA for the future battlefield and directs training for joint operations as well as special operations and information and electronic warfare.¹¹¹

FORCE STRUCTURE

Party commitment to military modernization was expressed in 1985 in the form of a 25 percent reduction in forces, or approximately one million men. The PLA Chief of Staff noted that military strength is no longer measured in the number of troops but "by the quality of its commanders and fighters, the quality of its arms, and the degree and rationality of its systems and foundations."¹¹² The cuts were part of Deng's efforts to simultaneously lessen PLA political involvement and improve military professionalism, which had been degraded by "bloating, laxity, conceit, extravagance, and inertia."¹¹³ The consolidation of military regions also occurred at this time and supported efforts to integrate military assets and restructure the command and control system. Deng also hoped

¹¹⁰ June Teufel Dreyer, "The New Officer Corps: Implications for the Future," in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 55-59.

¹¹¹ Godwin, "Compensating For Deficiencies," 111.

¹¹² Godwin, "From Continent to Periphery: PLA Doctrine, Strategy and Capabilities Towards 2000," in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 202.

¹¹³ Mel Gurtov, "Swords Into Market Shares: China's Conversion of Military Industry," *The China Quarterly* (June 1993): 233.

to eradicate corruption, allay concerns of factionalism, and improve the 'work style' of PLA officers.¹¹⁴ By 1988 the PLA numbered approximately 3.2 million men, with a greater emphasis on units trained to respond quickly in the event of conflict. A leaner PLA was expected to result in a more efficient and flexible command structure, which would free up funds to pursue much-needed weapons development and procurement. Reliance on a smaller force dictates the need for technologically advanced weapons systems and by inference requires technically proficient leaders, experts in military operations.¹¹⁵

The reduction in PLA forces effectively served Deng's political and military goals. A modernized, technologically advanced military requires personnel able to grasp and apply complex operational concepts and strategies. Renewed concentration on modernization and official disapproval of PLA political participation paved the way for the PLA's to return to "an exclusive pre-occupation with professional tasks."¹¹⁶ Reduction and consolidation of the military command structure allowed Deng to remove entrenched, revolutionary era cadres, freeing up promotion opportunities for younger officers able to provide new perspectives on the PLA's future development. Because of their relative youth, few of the new leadership were influenced by the old 'field army' system of loyalties or cliques, or even personal loyalties. The expectation is that this generation or cohort of officers will be more focused on military

¹¹⁴ Ellis Joffe, "The Chinese Army After Mao," 141-143.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 135-136.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 150.

modernization and national defense issues and less politically motivated or involved.¹¹⁷

Reduced political emphasis and heightened focus on technical military arts and training produced distinct differentiation among political and military officers. The following excerpt from a RAND study shows the extent of the separation between military commanders and political commissars.

The senior officer corps is increasingly specialized in functional expertise, with a clear differentiation among political, military, and technical officers. In 1994, 41 percent of PLA officers followed exclusively military careers (up from 33 percent in 1988), while the percentage of officers engaged only in political work rose from 27 percent in 1989 to 42 percent in 1994. In contrast, the percentage of officers whose career paths had involved both military and political work fell from 21 percent in 1989 to 8 percent in 1994. Overall, the percentage of officers engaged in specialized careers rose 26 percent, while those with cross-fertilized careers fell more than 68 percent. Finally, the distribution of specialized careers is highly correlated with age, as younger officers have followed more specialized careers than older officers.¹¹⁸

Similar developments have occurred in the enlisted ranks as well. An extensive revision of the Military Service Law in 1999 reduced the length of conscription from three to two years,¹¹⁹ signaling an increased reliance on a career cadre of non-commissioned officers to form the backbone of the PLA.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ron Montaperto, "China as a Military Power," *Strategic Forum* 56, (December 1995) [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum56.html>; Internet; Accessed 18 September 2001.

¹¹⁸ James C. Mulvenon, "Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps," RAND Center for Asia-Pacific Policy; Available from <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR901>; Internet; Accessed 10 July 2001.

¹¹⁹ Bickford, "Regularization," 465.

¹²⁰ Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 665.

Additional manpower cuts announced in 1997 as part of a three-year plan further reduced the number of military personnel by 500,000 to about 2.5 million. The importance of the latest reduction is the change in the composition of the PLA. A majority of the troops deactivated or reassigned to the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) were ground forces, resulting in an increase in the sizes of the PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF) in relation to the PLA total forces. PLAN and PLAAF now account for roughly 10 percent and 17 percent, respectively. While quite small compared to U.S. naval forces (40 percent) and air force (27 percent)¹²¹ the implication is an increased emphasis on advanced weaponry and joint combat operations.

MILITARY EDUCATION

Changes in the PLA's military education system have been necessary to train officers able to employ modern weapons and command a smaller, more mobile PLA. Earlier generations of officers, steeped in political indoctrination at the expense of military skills, were largely uneducated. Greater specialization is required to command forces on the modern, fast-paced, high-tech battlefield. The current education curriculum consists of mandatory military education that is more technical and less political in nature. The application of clear, army-wide education standards suggest that professional norms are being instilled in the new generations of officers.

The PLA's education program was re-instituted in 1978 and new regulations required all officers to have graduated from a military academy.

¹²¹ Blasko, "A New PLA Force Structure," 264.

Officers in service at the time who lacked degrees were required to attend special training designed to increase their education level to at least that of a high school graduate. Those unable to meet the standard were dismissed or retired from service.¹²² The education level of the senior officer corps has continued to rise and younger officers have received secondary, postsecondary, and advanced military education at a higher rate than their predecessors. In 1994 more than 79 percent of the officer corps had received advanced education of some type while more than 55 percent had undergone professional military education.¹²³ By 1998, 54 percent of all PLA officers had a college level degree, compared to a mere 8 percent in 1978.¹²⁴ One report indicates the PLA's goal is for all officers to at least hold a Bachelor of Arts degree by 2010.¹²⁵

The military education program itself consists of military academies at the regional level, a mid-career command college, and the National Defense University. The military academies offer the equivalence of a four-year degree, with officers receiving instruction in a wide variety of general education topics in addition to military courses.¹²⁶ Under the current education program political subjects are still taught and are estimated to comprise 20-30 percent of the curriculum. At the mid-career level, many officers receive some graduate level instruction. The highest level, the National Defense University, focuses on preparing division and corps level commanders, exposing senior officers to

¹²² Dreyer, "The New Officer Corps," 54.

¹²³ Mulvenon, "Professionalization."

¹²⁴ Nan, "Organizational Changes of the PLA," 334.

¹²⁵ Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 664.

¹²⁶ Lonnie Henley, "Officer Education in the Chinese PLA," *Problems of Communism* (May/June 1987): 55-66.

training on China's national security goals. Additionally officers at this level have opportunities to study strategy and international security relations in addition to making contacts with foreign officers.¹²⁷ Increased interaction through military exchange programs should shape future PLA leaders' understanding and appreciation of western military professionalism.

Despite the PLA education program's increased military focus, there are a number of evident weaknesses. It is unlikely that the schools operating can produce the quantity of officers required annually.¹²⁸ Because many PLA instructors remain in teaching positions for their entire career, instructors may possess little or no actual experience with modern tactics or strategies. Recall that China conducted its last military campaign over twenty years ago when PLA doctrine was firmly grounded in the framework of 'people's war.' Not surprisingly, high-level officers still exhibit an inability or unwillingness to grasp the concepts required to operate in the modern combat environment. If military schools cannot instill the concepts of modern warfare in the officer corps then they will have difficulty when called to lead troops on the battlefield. However, the emphasis on education has resulted in a new generation of better-educated officers with standardized backgrounds, laying a basis for greater standardization within the PLA. More importantly, the increasing homogeneity of officers' education, with reduced political content, will serve to enhance a promising sense of corporateness.

¹²⁷ Dreyer, "The New Officer Corps," 55-59.

¹²⁸ Henley, 70.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS (REGULARIZATION)

An increase in military regulations and laws has accompanied and supported the drive to modernize and professionalize the PLA. Of particular interest are the laws and regulations that echo Deng's call for military modernization and regularization.¹²⁹ Party leaders viewed laws and regulations as a means for strengthening and codifying their control of the PLA while also laying the necessary foundations for successful modernization. Standardization in training, education, doctrine, operations and legal norms¹³⁰ is essential for conducting complex military operations. Because a highly regularized military should exhibit professional characteristics, reviewing the PLA's regularization campaign will be helpful assessing the PLA's degree of professionalism.

The Party initiated the regularization drive two decades ago, but the majority of progress has taken place only in recent years. Prior to 1980 the PLA's historical legacy played a key role in minimizing the development of military regulations. Standardization is not very applicable to a dispersed guerilla force so the few existent rules were quite rudimentary. Introduction of the Soviet army model in the 1950s necessitated commonality among PLA units but the Sino-Soviet split which soon followed led to the rejection of all Soviet influences, including the use of Soviet military concepts. The Cultural Revolution, with its call for egalitarianism among the ranks, not only severely disrupted discipline but also destroyed any regularization that existed. Continuation of the 'people's war'

¹²⁹ Jencks, 19.

¹³⁰ Bickford, "Regularization," 456-458.

doctrine negated the need to establish regulatory principles. In fact a field manual produced in 1975 was merely a reproduction of the 1945 edition.¹³¹

Interest in regularization began in earnest in 1985 with the drive to modernize the PLA. Senior PLA officers realized the necessity of standardization to develop a professional, technically specialized officer corps. However, after so many years without clearly defined rules of conduct, implementing centrally dictated regulations proved more difficult than one would suspect. Commanders were able to selectively enforce regulations. For example, the seemingly innocuous regulation re-instating a formal rank structure required three years to implement. Even more problematic, just as laws and regulations were being introduced the PLA was in the process of establishing its business empire. The military's economic undertaking not only distracted from training, discipline and modernization efforts, but also fostered a belief in many PLA officers that laws and regulations did not pertain to them. The Party launched a rectification campaign in 1994 but few PLA units complied with directives to cooperate with investigators.¹³² This type of maverick behavior along with related corruption and smuggling scandals ultimately led to the Party's 1998 order to completely divest.

The process of regularization has sped up considerably since Tiananmen. Twelve of the thirteen sections of PLA military law have been enacted in the past ten years. Much of the increase reflects changes in doctrine and associated regulations. An expansive set of combat and logistical regulations was published

¹³¹ Ibid., 458-462.

¹³² Ibid., 465-471.

in 1999¹³³ to support combined arms operations as called for in Jiang's 'new generation' directive. Also in 1999, the military service law was revised to emphasize the importance of developing an NCO corps in light of decreased reliance on conscription.

Two closely related areas of regularization, retirement and promotion, have produced tremendous speculation about the rise of PLA professionalism. Apparent adherence to retirement and promotion regulations is not only a sign of greater institutionalization within the military¹³⁴ but also has significantly reduced the average age of the senior leadership and allowed technically proficient officers to be promoted in greater numbers. The PLA retirement system is based upon age, position, and rank and there has been a noticeable decline in the average age of officers at every level of the PLA. By 1994 the average age of CMC members, General Department directors and MR commanders or political commissars was reduced by thirteen years, nine years, and ten years, respectively.¹³⁵ Enforcing retirement norms is politically advantageous to the Party as it helps ensure officers are not able to build personal loyalty networks. A promotion process based on military qualifications, education requirements, and in some instances, a pre-requisite of attendance at a specific level of military academy¹³⁶ serves as an additional impediment to 'faction building' while inculcating technical expertise in newer generations of officers. However, evidence suggests that 'cliques' may have evolved based upon the service

¹³³ Bickford, "Retrospective," 26.

¹³⁴ Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition," 268.

¹³⁵ Mulvenon, "Professionalization."

¹³⁶ Henley, 70.

academy an officer has graduated from, but these cliques seem to be limited in influence to promotions of lower level officers.¹³⁷ The earlier discussion concerning the CMC's power to promote and appoint senior officers also leads one to believe personal ties continue to influence at least the highest levels of the PLA.¹³⁸

Initial efforts to lay the groundwork for the PLA to be ruled by law have been moderately successful. The foundations are in place and have led to greater institutionalization within the PLA. However the continuation of 'informal' rules at the high command level of the Party-army relationship shows that there is still work to be done. The recent departure of the PLA from the business arena and concomitant reliance on the State for funding may be a harbinger that the military will adhere more closely to laws established by the State.¹³⁹ However, there are no guarantees the Party is willing to allow the gun to slip from its grasp. Speaking at ceremonies commemorating the 74th anniversary of the PLA in August 2001, General Chi Haotian, vice-chairman of the CMC, defense minister, and State councilor, reaffirmed the Party's leadership of the armed forces, declaring the PLA's intent to "maintain the authority of the CPC Central Committee and the CMC with Comrade Jiang Zemin at the core, and forever obey the command of the Party."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Dreyer, "The New Officer Corps," 66.

¹³⁸ Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 666.

¹³⁹ Bickford, "Regularization," 456-458.

¹⁴⁰ "Party Leadership over Army Never to be Shaken: Chi."

SUMMARY

The PLA has effectively made use of the semi-autonomy granted by the Party-directed withdrawal from political activity to improve the underlying military infrastructure weakened by years of subordination to political objectives. The military's pursuit of professionalism supports the Party and State goal of China being regarded as a world military power, but also allows the military to advance its own, distinct military interests. Modernization and corresponding revisions of the force structure, improvements in the education system, and the introduction of regularization have improved expertise, promoted meritocracy, standardized career patterns, increased corporateness, and introduced institutionalization.¹⁴¹ While modernization, technical proficiency, and regularization are compelling indicators of professionalization they are not guarantees that it currently exists or will occur. Historically, Chinese military professionalization has been chronically plagued by intermittent support and a susceptibility to shifts in political winds.¹⁴²

A professional military is expected to be less *directly* involved in the political process,¹⁴³ as the PLA seems to be, though the PLA has not yet fully realized a responsibility to serve the State rather than the Party. The Party is acutely aware that professionalism is a two-edged sword that can lead to the military's withdrawal from politics or can result in the military's intervention in politics. Party programs to instill political loyalty and emphasize the importance

¹⁴¹ Mulvenon, "Professionalization."

¹⁴² Shambaugh, "Reform at Last," 672.

¹⁴³ Zheng, 232.

of ideology illustrate how much emphasis the CCP places on the political loyalty of military leaders. The PLA will not evolve into a professional army in the western sense until there is a fundamental change in the Chinese Party-State-army relationship that clearly and definitively communicates the military's subordination to the State. However, the Party is cognizant that any change in the Party-State relation can undermine the party-state itself.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Bickford, "A Retrospective," 32-34.

THE PLA'S FOCUS ON EXTERNAL THREATS

Evidence so far shows the PLA is increasingly professional and developing closer ties to the State while retaining numerous aspects of its symbiotic relationship with the CCP. Does the PLA still serve as the Party's praetorian guard? Another means of gauging the status of Party-army and State-army ties is to consider the PLA's mission focus. If the military is primarily committed to upholding Party interests, then we should recognize a preoccupation with Party efforts to maintain its position of power in China. Similarly, a military that places greater emphasis on its relations with the State should exhibit a predisposition towards safeguarding national interests. Coincidentally, Huntington's model of a professional military regards the realization of responsibility to the State as one of the key indicators of professionalism. Of course, analyzing the Chinese system is more difficult due to the CCP's monopoly of power, as the Party's interests are largely identical to those of the State.

DISTINCT MISSION FOCUS

Just as it is difficult to regard the CCP and State or the CCP and army as separate, distinct entities, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between the PLA and the PAPF. The white paper titled *China's National Defense in 2000* states that "the armed forces of the PRC are composed of the PLA, both the active and reserve components, the Chinese People's Armed Police Force and the

militia.”¹⁴⁵ The PRC Constitution and National Defense Law formally establish the roles of the military. These documents categorize the roles of the armed forces as consolidating national defense, resisting aggression, defending the motherland, safeguarding the people's peaceful labor, participating in national construction and serving the people.

Within this broad description more explicit roles are specified for each branch, amounting to a division of labor between the PLA and PAPF. Delineation between the PLA and PAPF and the PAPF's alignment with the State's security apparatus signifies official recognition that the two units have distinct mission focus.¹⁴⁶ The PRC has drawn an explicit distinction between internal security and external threats. The PLA, described as the State's standing army, “mainly undertakes the task of defensive combat” while the PAPF “undertakes the task of maintenance of security entrusted by the state.”¹⁴⁷

Under Mao the PLA served alternately as a fighting force, production force, propaganda instrument or ideological role model¹⁴⁸ while Deng's reformist movement strove to develop a more professional army with minimal non-military distractions.¹⁴⁹ The PAPF was established in 1983 to “fight the enemies of the Four Cardinal Principles”¹⁵⁰ under the leadership of the CMC and State Council while the Ministry of Public Safety (MPS) maintained operational command of

¹⁴⁵ “China's National Defense in 2000,” 5.

¹⁴⁶ Dreyer, “China's Military in the 1980s,” *Current History* 89, no. 548 (September 1990): 347.

¹⁴⁷ “China's National Defense in 2000,” 5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Bickford, “Regularization and the Chinese PLA: An Assessment of Change,” *Asian Survey* 40, no. 3 (2000): 456.

¹⁴⁹ Johnston, “Changing Party-Army Relations,” 1018-1020.

¹⁵⁰ Zheng, 142.

PAPF activities.¹⁵¹ This command structure allows PLA leaders to direct their attention and resources on traditional military endeavors, such as national security and policy issues.¹⁵² A good indicator of the desire to maintain separation between the PLA and internal security forces was the Party's reliance on the PAPF to handle Tiananmen demonstrations of 1989. The PLA was ordered into action only after it was unquestionably apparent the PAPF was unsuited to the task at hand.

The PAPF's establishment closely coincided with Deng's directive reducing the standing army by one million men. In fact, the PAPF is largely comprised of deactivated PLA soldiers. In many instances, entire PLA divisions (officers, soldiers, weapons, and equipment) were converted en masse to PAPF units and the strength of the PAPF was approximately 600,000 by the end of 1985. Since that time the PAPF has swelled to a force of approximately 1 million personnel heavily armed with helicopters, light artillery and armored vehicles.

Among the specific roles the PAPF carries out are social stability, fighting against organized crime, and providing security for State and Party facilities.¹⁵³ The PAPF's size and armament enable it to form the "Party's first line of defense against any form of urban popular protests and ... to operate as a critical buffer

¹⁵¹ Tai Ming Cheung, "Guarding China's Domestic Front Line: The People's Armed Police and China's Stability," in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 263.

¹⁵² Edwards, "Role of the PLA," 3.

¹⁵³ Tai, "Guarding China's Domestic Front Line," 271-274.

between the PLA and civil unrest.”¹⁵⁴ Reports of disturbances in China indicate that the PAPF is the primary agency for dealing with domestic upheaval.

At the same time, the PLA is expected “to maintain social order, if necessary, according to law.”¹⁵⁵ Conceivably the Party could utilize the PLA in support of PAPF operations, such as in Tiananmen, while justifying the actions as defending the motherland, serving the people, or perhaps even safeguarding the people’s peaceful labor. Following the 1989 Tiananmen disturbance, the *People’s Daily* reiterated the PLA’s role in support of the PAPF, stating that the “Party central leadership, the State Council and CMC may decide to use the army to impose martial law and suppress the hostile elements...this is also a function the army should perform...in line with the army’s sacred mission as prescribed in the constitution.”¹⁵⁶

In 1995, the PAPF was removed from MPS control and subjected to closer control by the PLA. Despite the reluctance of PLA commanders to resume the mission of domestic security, the General Staff Department was ordered to assume a more active role in PAPF operations.¹⁵⁷ PAPF lines of command were reorganized to mirror the PLA and PLA officers were placed in leading PAPF command positions.¹⁵⁸ Recent promotions of career PAPF officers will likely

¹⁵⁴ Swaran Singh, “China’s Internal Defense Strategy: Problems and Prospects,” *Strategic Analysis* 24, no. 12, March 2001 [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-mar-2.01.html>; Internet; Accessed 23 July 2001.

¹⁵⁵ “China’s National Defense in 2000,” 5-6.

¹⁵⁶ *People’s Daily*, December 18, 1989.

¹⁵⁷ Tai, “Guarding China’s Domestic Front Line,” 276.

¹⁵⁸ Larry M. Wortzel, “Challenges As China’s Communist Leaders Ride The Tiger Of Liberalization,” *The Heritage Foundation*, June 13, 2000 [journal on-line]; Available from [Http://www.Heritage.Org/Library/Lecture/HI669.Html](http://www.Heritage.Org/Library/Lecture/HI669.Html); Accessed 14 August 2001.

produce an effect similar to that experienced in the PLA's differentiation between political and military careers. A sense of corporateness will likely develop within the PAPF, leading to more pronounced specialization between it and the PLA. It stands to reason that as the PLA becomes more technologically advanced in pursuit of national defense goals, its forces will inevitably prove less suitable for domestic security missions.¹⁵⁹

DOCTRINE

The single greatest indicator of the PLA's preoccupation with China's external security, aside from participation in foreign policy issues, is the evolution of military doctrine. The speed and degree of change reflected in recent military thought indicates a strong realization that regional security issues are important to safeguarding the PRC's sovereignty and territorial integrity. PLA planners and strategists recognize that to properly defend China the military must be capable of conducting operations outside her borders. While continuing to base doctrine on the 'active defense' principle, the PLA appreciates it must be able to influence the battle before it reaches Chinese soil proper. China's doctrinal developments reveal the PLA's defense oriented, outward focus.

The foundational principle of Chinese military doctrine is 'people's war.' A number of factors contributed to the continued reliance on this concept into the mid-1970s. Marshal Zhu De's observation that China's military doctrine and strategy "depends on the weapons we have"¹⁶⁰ signified a critical weakness in the

¹⁵⁹ Blasko, "A New PLA Force Structure," 270.

¹⁶⁰ Nan, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and tactics, 1985-95: A Chinese Perspective," in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 195.

PLA. Military strategists' perception of warfare was stunted by the reality of the PLA's obsolete weapons and tactics. An extended war of attrition in the hinterlands of China was favorable to the PLA. PLA political involvement and lack of funding for advanced weapons further restricted development in military thought. Most importantly, China's threat assessment from 1950 through the late 1970s did not justify or necessitate a shift from the policy of "luring the enemy in deep."¹⁶¹

By 1978 the PLA expressed grave concern about the superior mobility and lethality of the Soviet army. Fears of Soviet tanks and mechanized infantry racing deep into China supported by nuclear attacks against China's industrial centers¹⁶² spurred the evolution of 'people's war under modern condition.' This forward defense concept envisioned engaging invading forces close to the border, before they were able to penetrate into the interior. Other doctrinal departures from 'people's war' included defending cities, fighting battles earlier to shape the course of the war, conducting positional as well as mobile defense, and the threat of nuclear forces as a deterrent.¹⁶³ The PLA inventory at this time, including naval and air force components, was fairly impressive though certainly not on par with Soviet forces. The critical observation about this new doctrine is that despite the advances, PLA planners were still adapting strategy to suit the capabilities of available weapons.

¹⁶¹ Godwin, "Compensating For Deficiencies," 91.

¹⁶² Ibid., 95.

¹⁶³ Nan, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine," 179.

By mid-1985 a number of shortcomings, principally logistical weakness, an absence of combined arms training, and the need to maintain forward deployed troops on a high state of alert, instigated a re-assessment of the PRC's modern warfare capabilities. PLA leaders adeptly identified the basis of the problem in the process of existing weaponry driving doctrine development, and set upon a course that intimately and effectively "linked doctrine, strategy, operations, training, and equipment."¹⁶⁴

Adherence to this new principle was reflected by the formulation and implementation of the 'limited, local war' doctrine. The PLA's goal was to develop a force capable of serving as a deterrent first and able to contain any conflict from escalating into full-scale war.¹⁶⁵ Smaller, highly mobile units with intelligence gathering and communications capabilities combined with lethal firepower were needed to realize this goal. Any future conflict would likely be conducted on a smaller scale with limited objectives outside of China's boundaries. The first step in this direction was the reduction in force. The second step was an emphasis on creating 'rapid response' forces to deal with short notice contingency operations on China's periphery. More frequent training exercises allowed commanders to evaluate the efficacy of the doctrine. They soon appreciated that despite the progress being made, the PLA's arms and supporting equipment was not conducive to joint operations requiring speed and lethality.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Godwin, "Compensating For Deficiencies," 96.

¹⁶⁵ Nan, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine," 181-3.

¹⁶⁶ Godwin, "Compensating For Deficiencies," 99-101.

The 1991 Gulf War in many ways exemplified what Chinese strategists envisioned as 'limited, local war.' It was "a short, high-intensity war fought for limited political objectives within a confined theater of operations."¹⁶⁷ The attribute that most impressed PLA leaders was the coalition forces' highly effective joint employment of naval, air, and ground troops in a highly integrated and effective manner, resulting in swift decisive victory. The PLA realized it had to place even greater "emphasis on developing elite forces characterized by integrated command and control, streamlined organization, high quality arms, and rapid deployment capabilities."¹⁶⁸ 'Local, limited war under high-tech conditions' provided even greater impetus to refocus strategic thinking. Doctrinal improvements are now proactive in nature, influencing the development of weapons rather than being driven by them. Doctrinal advances also influence continued adjustments to the PLA force structure, stressing smaller, more mobile units with greater ability to respond to a threat over a larger area. To ensure the doctrinal and tactical changes can be effectively implemented, combined arms training exercises designed to integrate naval, air and ground forces are now conducted on a more regular basis than in the past.¹⁶⁹

The prominence of joint campaign training reflects the PLA's increased capabilities but also highlights its limited force projection ability. Plans to increase the PLA Navy's (PLAN) range and scale of operations reflect an overall concern with enlarging China's security buffer. Amphibious warfare, submarine

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 101.

¹⁶⁸ Nan, "The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine," 192.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 193-197

operations, and interest in acquiring or developing an aircraft carrier indicate the desire to enable the PLAN to move beyond a coastal defense capability. The range of aircraft providing security limits current operations to approximately 400 miles. Logistics shortcomings further hamper the PLA's ability to conduct sustained operations.¹⁷⁰ The increased size of the PLAN and PLAAF as a percentage of the PLA signifies their enhanced prominence in China's military strategy, reflecting PLA leaders' revised view of the international security environment.

While PLA doctrine has evolved substantially over the past decade, the process is far from complete. The greatest difficulty facing the PLA is successful implementation of advanced doctrine and strategy. The fact that changes have been evolutionary rather than revolutionary demonstrates the challenge facing PLA leaders. For fifty years Chinese soldiers have been steeped in the 'people's war' doctrine. In order to inculcate new concepts the PLA must change the fundamental way soldiers perceive warfare. An additional difficulty lies in the lack of operational and tactical principles necessary to incorporate the doctrine at the operational level, as the latest doctrine is still in development, composed largely in broad, generalized terms.¹⁷¹ The level of detail and specificity necessary for introduction at the soldier level has not been finalized. In concrete terms, modernization efforts face an inherent difficulty in acquiring, absorbing, and assimilating new technology. Moreover, while the processes of doctrine writing and weapons modernization are more complementary than in the past, they are

¹⁷⁰ Godwin, "From Continent to Periphery," 210 -213.

¹⁷¹ Bickford, "Regularization," 467.

not yet effectively synchronized. Given that the PLA has only very recently initiated joint operations training at the unit level, effective operational employment is unlikely for a decade or so.¹⁷²

NATIONALISM—THE PLA AS GUARDIAN OF SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY

The reform period promoted the importance of economic development as the basis for a strong and stable China. The PLA has actively supported the primacy of economic construction over defense modernization. The same perceptions of a drastically changed international relations framework that led the PLA to overhaul its warfighting doctrine have also caused increased attention to matters of foreign affairs and regional security issues. Both the Party and PLA realize the value of “a peaceful international and a favorable peripheral environment for China's socialist modernization drive.”¹⁷³ An important outgrowth of the military's championing of national security interests over social, political, and economic concerns is the PLA's self-appointed guardianship of China's sovereignty and nationalism.¹⁷⁴

A post-1985 shift in PLA thinking from the Maoist revolutionary ideals of class struggle to modernization and professional military aims had a profound influence on perceptions of the PRC's security interests and goals. Rather than expounding on the primacy of class warfare, the PLA acquired a preoccupation with threats external to the PRC, especially in regards to China's sovereignty and

¹⁷² Leeb.

¹⁷³ “China's National Defense in 2000,” 3.

¹⁷⁴ Shambaugh, “China's Military in Transition,” 274.

territorial integrity.¹⁷⁵ An accompanying recognition of the nation-state as the principal actor in the international setting yielded an emphasis on the sanctity of China's national borders and growing distrust of increased U.S. influence in China's traditional spheres of influence. This concern was also reflected in the doctrinal shift towards 'limited, local wars.'

Although the shift in thinking began while the PLA subordinated its modernization plan to national economic development, the growing spirit of nationalism has enhanced the PLA's willingness to take a leading role in promoting China's security policy. The PLA's views are expressed through its participation on issues as diverse as the South China Sea, nuclear non-proliferation, and human rights. However, the principal outlets for the PLA's security concerns are its resolute accusations of a U.S. containment policy towards China¹⁷⁶ and an irredentist stand on the Taiwan issue.¹⁷⁷

U.S. influence in the Pacific region, in South Korea and Japan specifically, serve to enflame PLA concerns about China's national security and sovereignty. During the recent EP-3 incident reports surfaced of infighting between the PLA and Foreign Ministry over the handling of the incident. It is alleged that several retired generals castigated Jiang for adopting a "weak and lax policy" toward the U.S. in order to foster closer economic ties. PLA generals also voiced displeasure

¹⁷⁵ Nan, *From Revolutionary Internationalism to Conservative Nationalism: The Chinese Military's Discourse on National Security and Identity in the Post-Mao Era* (United States Institute of Peace, May 2001), 15-19.

¹⁷⁶ Ron Montaperto, "Managing U.S. Relations with China: Towards a New Strategic Bargain," *Strategic Forum* 42, August 1995 [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum42.html>; Internet; Accessed 25 July 2001.

¹⁷⁷ Nan, *Revolutionary Internationalism*, 7.

when the CMC refused to authorize action against another surveillance aircraft flying along China's northeastern coast. In response the Party leadership ordered the PLA to rein in 'excessive' expressions of nationalism, insisting China should "strike a balance between asserting national sovereignty and dignity on the one hand and, on the other, avoiding inordinately hostile stances against the U.S."¹⁷⁸

The PLA's central contention is that the U.S. possesses an ability to shape policy and decision-making in China's neighbors, which is regarded as infringement upon China's sovereignty. The PLA asserts that the U.S. is cultivating a "regional security structure based on a military presence and military alliances" directed against China. Not only are Japan and South Korea in geographic proximity to China, they are also China's primary competitors in regional affairs. In the PLA view, China should maintain a stronger presence than Japan and at least equal to the United States. A security order in which the U.S., Chinese, and Japanese roles and relationships are significantly altered from the present situation might placate PLA hardliners.¹⁷⁹

Another area of U.S. policy seen as affecting to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity is Taiwan. In March 1995 Jiang declared that the PLA would play an "extremely important role in accomplishing reunification" with Taiwan.¹⁸⁰ Drastic changes in the PRC's handling of relations with Taiwan in 1995 clearly

¹⁷⁸ Lam, "Gag Order Placed On Chinese Military," *CNN.Com*, [newspaper on-line]; Available from <http://asia.cnn.com/2001/US/05/09/china.us.plane.03/index.html>; Internet; Accessed 23 August 2001.

¹⁷⁹ Ronald N. Montaperto and Hans Binnendijk, "PLA Views on Asia Pacific Security in the 21st Century," *Strategic Forum* 114, June 1997[journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/forum114.html>; Internet; Accessed 16 September 2001.

¹⁸⁰ Gilley, 253.

demonstrated the PLA's leading role in carrying the banner of Chinese nationalism. The CMC had recently conducted a comprehensive review of Taiwan policy and expressed concern over Lee Teng Hui's pro-independence stance, Taiwan's upcoming first democratic elections, and a belief that newer generations of Taiwanese are less likely to favor unification. Despite PLA reservations, China adopted a wait and see attitude, while increasing the scale of military training in the provinces near Taiwan. Lee's acceptance of President Clinton's invitation to visit the U.S. in May of 1995 convinced senior PLA leaders that Taiwan was about to declare its independence and that efforts had to be carried out to convince her otherwise.¹⁸¹

In June and July 1995 the PLA conducted a series of combined air, land, and sea exercises within 60 miles Taiwan. At the conclusion of the exercises the PRC launched six nuclear and chemical capable DF-21 and M-9 missiles about 100 miles north of Taiwan. In November prior to national legislative elections Jiang personally participated in another large-scale exercise simulating an invasion of Taiwan. The exercise included combined-arms amphibious and airborne assault operations involving about 20,000 troops, 40 ships, and 100 aircraft. Reports were also leaked to the Hong Kong press about a possible invasion and occupation of a Taiwanese island and naval blockade of the Taiwan Strait. The PRC's bellicose actions were designed to coerce Taiwan to begin reunification talks on Beijing's terms.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Tai, "The Influence of the Gun," 76-80.

¹⁸² Richard D. Fisher, "China's Threats To Taiwan Challenge U.S. Leadership In Asia," *Asian Studies Center Backgrounder* 139, 6 March 1996 [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.heritage.org/library/categories/forpol/asc139.html>; Internet; Accessed 7 August 2001.

Although the military threats failed to prevent Lee Teng Hui's election, it is worth noting that Taiwan refers to itself as an independent sovereign state but has not declared formal independence, nor does it seem it will do so any time soon. The dispatch of carrier groups to the Taiwan Strait served as further justification for PLA leaders that the U.S. interferes in Chinese issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Moreover, the drastic escalation of threatening military exercises towards Taiwan undeniably demonstrate the PLA's influence in matters of national security and a willingness to assert its position.

SUMMARY

Although the PLA and PAPF are both components of the PRC's armed forces, PLA leaders strongly supported the Party's separation of domestic and national security functions. The establishment of the PAPF in 1983 and Party actions to minimize the participation of military leaders in politics have proven beneficial for the PLA's pursuit of a modern, integrated military. Although the PLA is still quite some time away from fully implementing the advanced tactical concepts planners envision due to modernization issues, entrenchment of the 'people's war' model and ongoing doctrine development, military leaders have seized the opportunity afforded them by the distinction between internal and external security missions.

The PLA has enthusiastically accepted the mission of protecting China's national security against external threats. Whether dealing with the world's only 'superpower' or the 'renegade' province of Taiwan, the PLA has proven unwavering in promoting Chinese nationalism, particularly in terms of

sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the execution of its role as China's guardian, the PLA has been increasingly vocal in asserting its position on matters of national defense. The consensus style leadership favored by Jiang has garnered military support for Party policy, but enables the PLA to play a leading role in national security policy. The PLA does not single handedly direct foreign policy, but is exceptionally capable of influencing the decisions ultimately decided by civilian leaders.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the PLA's response to China's changing environment in terms of its relationship with the Party and subsequent adaptations within the military that reflect an altered role in preserving the Party's monopoly of power. The CCP has been forced to react to global, regional, and domestic pressures as it seeks to retain leadership in China. As Party leaders adjust policies to safeguard economic development and social stability, the PLA has responded in kind as its role has been altered.

Because the Party correctly views the PLA as an "important guarantor of the State's security, social stability, and the unification of the motherland,"¹⁸³ one of the Party's primary objectives is to retain political control of the military. The PLA reaction to the continuation of Party dominance is a fusion of willing support tempered with the capacity to influence Party actions for the direct benefit of military interests, specifically national defense issues and financial budgets. Party political and ideological directives have largely been complied with by the military. However, the refusal to relinquish complete control of the business empire displayed the PLA's deep concern over military funding as well as the political strength available to the military. Not only did the PLA retain key military industries, it also exacted supplemental funding for the military budget.

¹⁸³ M.V. Rappai, "Party Commands the Gun?" *Strategic Analysis*, 21:11, February 1998, [journal on-line]; Available from <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-mar-2.01.html>; Internet; Accessed 23 July 2001.

The pronounced reduction of PLA members actively holding Party and State political positions is further evidence that the military is not presenting itself as a challenger for political power in China. Rather, military planners have successfully capitalized upon the Party's call for a "militarily independent PLA." Due to the growing separation between civilian and military careers and the PLA's monopoly on military technical expertise, the PLA has established itself as the guardian of China's national security. Despite the exclusion of PLA officers from the Party's highest political body, military leaders seek to retain their tremendous influence on China's foreign policy and security issues.

Military professionalism is evident in many aspects of the PLA, from equipment modernization to education reforms. However, the growth of professional characteristics has not been accompanied by complete withdrawal of the PLA from the political arena. While the western notion of a professional military proscribes an a-political nature, the PLA continues to maintain a very powerful, informal influence on Party policy and decision-making. As it built a modern, professional military, the PLA also developed a strong interest in promoting military concerns. The PLA's willingness to vocally express its point of view on foreign policy issues, the budget, and national defense illustrate the military leaders' desire to preserve enough political force to protect and advance military interests.

The PLA's primary mission is to defend the PRC from external threats. Senior military leaders have developed a credible military capability by focusing their efforts on military affairs while the PAPF attends to internal security

concerns. Support for Party actions that clearly delineate the PLA and PAPF's mission focus provided PLA senior officials the opportunity to assume a leading role in guiding national security and foreign policy decisions. PLA leaders have been very assertive in promoting Chinese nationalism to support military modernization programs. Military leaders maintain enough political influence to effectively push for military modernization programs to support advanced doctrine developments.

The PLA's response to Party policy adjustments demonstrates a continued capability to influence civilian decision making in the key areas of military budgets and national security policy. The PLA has never directly challenged the Party's leadership at any time, but neither has it completely surrendered its capacity to shape political discourse. Military leaders have willingly complied with Party directives to reduce the military's political influence and develop as a professional military force, but the PLA has stubbornly maintained enough power to effect decisions concerning military matters. PLA cooperation with Party strategies to reduce the PLA's political influence proved beneficial to military officers' pursuit of military aims and provides the PLA with a unique ability to influence Party policy.

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